

The rate of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) in the Navy and Marine and especially as it relates to the recruit population was discussed at the Navy Epi Board in February 2005 in response to a request from Great Lakes Recruit Training Center. They report that they have been seeing an increase from a background number of 0-2 cases per year to 4-6 cases per year over the past 5-6 years. It has gained BUMED, NEHC, media and parental attention. In addition the two cases recently diagnosed together within a month at MCRD-PI also added to the interest in this rare syndrome.

NEHC Staff did a literature review and then investigated the actual number of cases seen over the past few years in Department of Defense beneficiaries and found:

- General population
 - 1-2 cases per 100,000 people per year
 - Case rates from various studies range from 0.4 to 4.0 cases/100,000 people/year
- NEHC Review of Active Duty Case Rates, 1999-2004
 - All services fall within the range of the rate for the general population
 - For all services, the GBS rates have remained relatively consistent from 2000-2004
 - Averages per service:
 - 2.7 (Air Force)
 - 3.10 (Navy)
 - 3.15 (USMC)
 - 3.26 (Army)
- Methods:
 - All cases with a 357.0 ICD-9 code in any ICD-9 position were considered cases
 - Allows for the potential of including misdiagnosed cases as well as cases who had a history of GBS but who were being seen for another ailment
 - Leads to an overestimation of rates
 - No statistical analyses were done to determine if there was any significant difference in rates from year to year.

The Navy Epidemiology Board recommended further investigation to determine if there is a problem with GBS in recruits and gather further data, which is ongoing. The NEHC Population Health Directorate is doing comparison studies in collaboration with the NEPMUs and will report findings at the next Board meeting in August.

NEHC also developed a fact sheet (attached) that was used to assist NEPMU2 and NH Beaufort respond to the reporter inquiry. The report that resulted is a fair and balanced informative report on this rare syndrome.